

North Liverpool Regeneration Company

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		12-15 August 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- Overall success rates are high and improving.
- Learners gain a wide range of additional qualifications which prepare them well for work.
- Staffs' high expectations, the good development of trade skills and very effective levels of support help all learners to achieve well.
- Learning sessions very effectively develop learners' theory, knowledge and practical skills.
- Good off-the-job training resources provide learners with industry standard training.
- A good range of strategies and initiatives help secure work opportunities for learners that meet local needs.
- Well-managed safeguarding arrangements provide a secure and safe environment for learners.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Too many learners make slow progress and do not achieve within their planned time.
- Learners receive insufficient advice and guidance on progression routes and only a small proportion of learners' progress to further training.
- Targets set following initial and ongoing assessments are insufficiently challenging in ensuring learners progress from their initial starting points in English and mathematics. Learner progress reviews do not focus sufficiently on specific skills and knowledge development.
- Self-assessment lacks clarity and management information systems do not provide a cohesive data analysis of apprenticeship framework requirements.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the pace of learners' progress by shortening the time between induction and learners' start date on-site to allow for the earlier collection of work-based evidence required to complete the apprenticeship programme.
- Personalise initial assessment processes, set challenging targets and provide training for staff to ensure learners make good progress from their initial starting points in English and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of learner progress reviews to provide more precise focus on learners' progress. Set clear and measurable targets for their vocational and functional skills development. Provide specific guidance and monitoring to help learners achieve their next target.
- Provide written feedback for all learner assessments which clearly confirm learners' achievements to date, identify all areas for improvement and the steps they need to take to make progress.
- Refine information, advice and guidance so that learners are clear about the various stages of their programme including the start of their apprenticeship, planning their next steps and subsequent progression opportunities, including further training and employment options. Develop the functionality of the management information system to enable managers to receive accurate, timely and meaningful data analysis reports about all aspects of training programmes, including functional skills and technical certificates, and different groups of learners.
- Devise a concise and relevant self-assessment report with a clear grading structure. Formulate the quality improvement plan as a working document which incorporates organisational development plans.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Overall success rates for intermediate apprentices are well above national rates and have improved significantly since the last inspection. Although the number of learners completing within their planned time has improved, a small proportion of learners make slow progress and do not achieve within the planned period of their training. The most current North Liverpool Regeneration Company (NLRCO) data indicate continued improvement of overall and timely success rates. Most learners make at least the progress expected of them.
- On-site training for learners is often delayed due to a lack of employers willing to provide training opportunities which impacts on progress. For example, learners learning the trade of plastering generally make more progress than learners of bricklaying. Where learners spend several months in the training centre before employers are found, their progress is delayed. Although learners continue to develop their practical skills in the training centre, a significant proportion do not have access to employers' work environments in which they can develop their skills. This situation has been amplified by the downturn in the construction industry even though there is a skill shortage in this trade area.
- Achievement gaps have been effectively identified, addressed and narrowed. Learners from minority ethnic groups and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve slightly better than other learners. Although female learners are under-represented they achieve broadly in line with males. Learners aged 16 to 18 achieve well while older learners generally achieve better.
- Almost all young people who join the apprenticeship programme come from communities of

acute economic and social disadvantage. At the time of inspection, the majority of learners were from some of the most deprived wards nationally. Before commencing their training, almost all learners represent young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and many have no formal qualifications on entry to training. A range of support agencies work closely with the organisation to ensure learners attend regularly, are punctual and stay on their programmes. Learners' participation on the training programme gives them a strong sense of purpose and they demonstrate a positive and determined aspiration to improve their social and economic well-being.

- Learners successfully gain a range of additional qualifications and success rates are very high. These include the Construction Skills Certification Scheme, Manual Handling, Health and Safety and First Aid training. This prepares apprentices well for entry into the construction industry and is greatly valued by employers. However, learners are not supported as well as they could be in developing English and mathematics skills.
- Learners completing units early in the course receive good recognition through the award of internal unit certificates which successfully encourage them to make even greater efforts. This has resulted in improved confidence and self-esteem for most learners and led to several gaining promotion to supervisory positions.
- Learners develop good trade skills which improve their employability. The standard of learners' work is good, particularly on-site. For example, a plastering learner working in a hospital skimmed a large wall with piers and angles to an exceptionally high standard. A significant proportion of learners require only a minimum level of supervision and make a good contribution to production targets on-site. Most learners progress into employment with their employers after completing their qualifications. However, higher performing learners do not receive sufficient advice and guidance on how to progress onto further training, such as advanced apprenticeships.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good and reflected in significantly improving success rates with current learners making better progress towards completion of their qualification. The large majority of learners join the programme with low starting points, developing good employability skills as a result of good personal and academic support provided by tutors and staff.
- Tutors are well motivated and have very good vocational knowledge which they use effectively in developing learners' understanding of the theory and practice of bricklaying, plastering and joinery. They also help learners to gain a good understanding of other trades. Consequently learners enjoy their learning and are keen to develop a career in the sector. For example, they enjoy learning about health and safety and its application on construction sites.
- Learners receive good personalised support through frequent progress review meetings which provide them with regular opportunities to discuss their learning and personal needs with tutors and staff. However, tracking of learners' development against sufficiently measurable targets lacks rigour resulting in too little challenge between reviews.
- Tutors engage learners well in interesting and lively sessions that are effectively planned, and allow learners to work at their own pace. Using a wide variety of realistic contexts, tutors broaden learners' understanding of sector specific topics and practical skills. For example, learners work on community projects to support environmental sustainability by installing external wall insulation to help reduce the level of fuel poverty. Learners' interim achievements are formally celebrated as they receive internal certification, which they value highly and is particularly motivational for them in completing the programme.
- Although on-site training is often delayed, it provides good employment opportunities with construction companies and provides learners with high-quality work experiences through which most learners gain permanent employment. Employers are keen for learners to succeed and

assign a workplace mentor to guide and support them while at work. Learners receive very good on-the-job training which consolidates and expands their construction knowledge and skills in areas of work which include building arches, block paving and ornamental plaster work.

- Initial assessment is generally well used to identify learners' vocational aptitude, literacy and numeracy support needs. However, these results are not used well enough to personalise learning and enable all learners to develop their English and mathematics skills to a higher level. Tutors assess learners' work regularly and provide learners with prompt, helpful verbal feedback which encourages and motivates them to continue in their learning programme. However, written feedback is often limited and lacks specific focus on how learners can improve their practice and develop further their craft. Target-setting is imprecise and lacks focus on developing learners' skills, including those in English and mathematics.
- The development of learners' mathematics skills is embedded well within vocational teaching. However, there is less emphasis on developing learners' English skills within the curriculum, for example extending sector specific vocabulary and improving spelling and grammar. Tutors are generally keen to support learners to improve these skills, but have not received training on how to do this.
- Learners generally receive a good level of initial advice and guidance during their training and the large majority of learners enjoy their training, displaying high levels of interest and commitment. However, the declining local labour market demands have a strong influence on whether successful work placements can be secured. NLRCO maintains a current record of learners who are ready to go into employment and learners are alerted as soon as vacancies appear. However, information and guidance for learners' next steps are not sufficiently refined and a minority of learners are unclear about when they will progress to on-site employment or further training.
- Learners develop a broad awareness of equality and diversity in training sessions as tutors successfully foster trust and understanding within their diverse learning groups. However, opportunities to deepen learners' understanding by considering and exploring important relevant issues of their occupational area are not routinely planned by tutors. For example, tolerating differences and interacting effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds when working on construction sites.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- An overriding and clear strategic vision to improve the aspirations of the local community through training and developing its young people is demonstrated by the board of directors and senior management of NLRCO. A particularly experienced and aware board of governors work closely to support and encourage the managing director through a wide range of local initiatives and projects. Both the managing director and project manager use their networking skills productively to secure opportunities for young people to progress in to the workplace. Successful tendering and grant procuring activity has led to building projects within the community which are beneficial to providing real work experience for learners and have longer term benefits for both the organisation and local people. Particular focus is on a green agenda to educate young people about environmental energy saving issues and raise awareness of the impact of issues, such as fuel poverty.
- Performance management within the organisation is underpinned by a well-developed annual appraisal system with regular interim reviews. Clear objectives are set and line managers monitor performance well. Staff value highly the fully supported development opportunities that NLRCO provide as a result of performance appraisal. The board of directors closely monitors organisational performance and performance of the senior managers through the receipt of regular management reports. Directors are well aware of the performance of the apprenticeship programme which is a key focus at all board meetings. A recent subcontract arrangement for childcare has been well managed with a range of performance measures implemented to ensure

learners progress well. However, some slight slippage has occurred on both overall quality reviews and observations of training due to a turnover in staffing. Performance of tutors in the classroom and in the practical training areas is now regularly monitored by observation and the process is developmental and valued by tutors, some of whom are very new to the organisation. Learner progress reviews are also observed for quality and improvement purposes. The process currently lacks sufficient focus from tutors on setting precise targets for learners on how to improve the standard of their skills.

- Although the self-assessment process at NLRCO is inclusive and well-understood by staff, the report produced lacks judgement and overall grades. Relying too heavily on description, firm judgements both for strengths and areas for improvement are not apparent. The overarching judgements however, identify some of the findings of the inspection team but are too few and lack detail. Feedback from learners and employers is gathered regularly and resulting improvements have been made. Quality improvement plans are in place and a range of improvement activity is underway and monitored by the senior management team. However, improvement monitoring lacks clarity because its information is spread across a range of documents making it difficult to have a cohesive view of how well quality is improving.
- A well-managed curriculum meets the needs of learners and in particular employers and the local community. Although there is a decline in the labour market, construction is currently an area of local skill-shortage within Liverpool and NLRCO is working with various agencies and both local and national employers to give work-experience and job opportunities to learners. The local community benefits greatly from the work that learners carry out as part of the home-energy saving initiative, the development of redundant buildings into offices and residential accommodation, and the development of facilities at the community centre. Recent tutor turnover has required an increase in staff development training that has led to slippage in the internal verification process. Observations by the internal verifier of assessment in the workplace have not been carried out this year however, awarding body external verifier reports have no major issues or concerns with the quality of assessment practice. Management information systems are generally well used to monitor and track learner progress however, they are not used to analyse the performance and results of other apprentice framework requirements, such as functional skills and technical certificates.
- Equality and diversity is a highly relevant and important issue for NLRCO as it deals with learners and families from severely disadvantaged backgrounds and community areas. NLRCO is very successful at removing severe barriers to learning. Many learners have dependencies and health issues that require close monitoring and in some cases specialist help. A range of drug, alcohol, homeless and other support agencies work closely with the organisation to make every effort to ensure learners stay on their programmes. Opportunities are taken through the learner forum to discuss aspects relating to equality and diversity. Good initiatives to widen minority ethnic representation on apprenticeships have been successful with three times as many learners from these backgrounds now on programme. Out-reach work in deprived postcode areas and work with local community groups has seen a rise particularly in the number of Afro-Caribbean and Muslim learners. Examples of opportunities given to ex-offenders were also identified. Although staff are well aware of their responsibilities and have a reasonable knowledge of equality and diversity, no specialist training has taken place recently. Work is underway to improve the integration of equality and diversity into learning sessions.
- NLRCO meets its statutory requirements for the safeguarding of learners. Health and safety is a keen focus for all staff and learners and learners' health, safety and well-being are particularly well monitored by all staff. The learning mentor has a dedicated role to ensure particularly disadvantaged learners are well-supported through a range of issues to help them attend regularly and complete their apprenticeships. When safeguarding issues occur they are very well recorded and satisfactorily resolved. External professional training organisations provide the specialist support and knowledge NLRCO requires. Site safety is particularly well monitored and managed. Learners comment positively on how safe they feel both in the training centre and in the workplace.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)**North Liverpool Regeneration Company Limited**

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	N/A
Outcomes for learners	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	N/A
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	N/A
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	N/A

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	2

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	80							
Principal/CEO	George Knibb (Managing Director)							
Date of previous inspection	December 2010							
Website address	www.nlrco.com							
Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	29	40	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ MATAc 							

Contextual information

North Liverpool Regeneration Company (NLRCO) is a non-profit company, limited by guarantee. NLRCO's aim is to provide education and training, support business development and provide community facilities. NLRCO holds a Skills Funding Agency (SFA) contract to provide intermediate apprenticeships in construction. The contract supports young people who are NEET. North Liverpool is among the top 10% most deprived areas in England; almost a third of the local population who are of working age are not employed. The managing director has overall responsibility for the apprenticeship training programme. A project manager is responsible for the operational management and is supported by external consultants, a learning mentor, five centre-based tutors and two administrators.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Tim Hanson

Three additional inspectors, assisted by the project manager as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject area listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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